

Al Broadhead herded cattle on the West Fork of the Duchesne and said that Ab would often stop to visit with him but wouldn't stay long even though nightfall was near. He recalled that Ab always traveled light without either food or blanket and would make a lone camp somewhere along the trail.<sup>9</sup>

In 1905 a large part of what had been a tradition of the Murdock life fell apart when the Ute Reservation was opened to homesteading. Fortunately Chief Tabby did not live to see settlers rushing in to claim his people's land, for he died at White Rocks on November 22nd, 1903. He was said to be 105 years old! Land that Al and Dave had leased was now claimed by others, became part of the national forest system, or was allotted to Indian families. A new town called Theodore, now Duchesne, was built in a day around that trading post Al had built years before. Al put up a large tent store to meet the needs of the new settlers, but he had no license to trade and agents appointed by politicians at Washington soon granted licenses to others. Later Al did build a new wooden store building and became the town's leading businessman.

Dave had no legal claim to his large Red Creek ranch, but he did homestead a small section at Box Canyon. Water rights at Strawberry Valley were granted to farmers at Utah Valley while the land became part of the Uinta Forest. Only a few years later, land where Al and Dave had grazed livestock was flooded by the Strawberry Reservoir. Al was appointed as the first Bishop at Duchesne, but Dave and his other brothers moved back to Heber City.

John H. was called on a second mission in 1907, to the Southern States. On his return he purchased the Heber Confectionery and later served as City Marshal for four years. Andrew owned a large herd of sheep for many years and later in life owned and operated the Ideal Theatre on Main Street. Frank and Pick continued to run the store and butcher shop at White Rocks until 1925 when Frank left the reservation. Pick died in 1928 and was buried in an unmarked grave on the Johnny Harms allotment. A lot of history was buried with him, including the secret of the Lost Rhoades Mine. The opening of the reservation marked the end of an era for the Murdocks.

Joseph's wife Jane lived until she was 86 years of age while Elizibeth lived to be 96. All of the Murdocks were known for their longevity; Will lived to be 81, Frank 82, John H. and Al both 87, Parley 93, and Dave 96. Many of Joseph's

9. Interview with Al Broadhead, February 17th, 1972, Heber City, Utah.



Albert Alma (Ab) Murdock  
Son of Joseph & Pernetta Murdock, murdered in 1911  
(Author)



daughters lived nearly as long, Margaret living to age 79 and Jane to age 92. Although Dave lived to be 96, he was active to the last. At an age when most men would take it a little easy, Dave went into the mountains where he cut his own logs to build the biggest barn in the valley. He would ride his horse to town each day, ramrod straight, although he had trouble holding the reins, for all of his fingers had been broken while playing with the city's hardball team, and he had let them heal without setting the broken bones. When he was 87 years old, Dr. Dannenberg told him he would have to stop riding horses, so Dave bought a bicycle! He was planning to learn to fly when he died at age 96.

Dave was a little irreverent, and like Nymphus he sometimes had an "eye-opener" in the morning. Many stories are told about Dave, but a family favorite is about one particularly hard winter when nearly everyone was out of hay for their livestock. One day Dave's poor old mother told him she needed some hay, so Dave agreed to bring her a wagon load. A few days later "Grandma Jane" told him that the hay was mouldy and that her cows wouldn't eat it. "*Heck, I know that,*" Dave said, "*My cows wouldn't eat it either!*"

On June 23rd, 1911 Ab was murdered by Alvin Scruggs near Dave's Red Creek ranch. Scruggs claimed that Ab had stolen a horse from him in Wyoming. Scruggs said that he lay in wait at Red Creek until Ab and Scott, Dave's son, then only a boy, rode down a dugway to the river. Scruggs claimed that Ab reached for a gun, so he had to kill him. In court Scott later testified that Ab was unarmed and Alphonso, who arrived on the scene shortly after the murder also testified that Ab did not have a weapon. Scruggs was arrested on a complaint signed by John H., but he was released on \$1,000 bond. In court Deputy Sheriff Gundmundson related that he had issued Scruggs a deputy's badge when he passed through Heber, therefore Judge Clegg ruled that there was no cause for action against Scruggs and released him.

Al Scruggs had killed five men in Wyoming before he killed Ab, but although John H. and his brothers all knew the trial was only a farce, they realized that because of the court's feelings about Ab's previous conviction at Manti and because he was "only an Indian" they could never get a conviction against Scruggs. The Salt Lake Tribune pretty well described how hopeless their case would be if appealed to a higher court. A Tribune editorial said, "*Scruggs had*

*the drop on the half-breed, and with one rifle shot Murdock was on his way to the happy hunting ground!"*<sup>10</sup> It was the end of the trail for Ab.

In 1908 Nymphus moved from his Charleston home to Heber City with his first wife Sarah, having given his second wife Esther a church-approved divorce. Nymphus installed one of the then newfangled telephones in his Heber home, but Sarah wouldn't use it because she said it was like talking to the dead! Nymphus had always been a poor man's philosopher, and some of his sayings are worth repeating. He said, *"I'd rather be a big toad in a little pond than be a little toad in a big pond, that's why I moved from Salt Lake City to Charleston."* He didn't think it was possible to get much work from a boy if more than one was hired, saying, *"One boy is a boy, two boys equal half a boy and three boys are the same as no boy at all!"* Another philosophy he shared was, *"A poor man has but one dog, while a poverty stricken man has two dogs, and a beggar has all the dogs he can get. You can always tell how poor a man is by the number of dogs he has!"*<sup>11</sup>

His wife Sarah died in 1909 and after being married to two wives for most of his life, Nymphus was lonely, so in 1913 when he was 80 years old he married Elizibeth Green, who was then 75. After the ceremony he announced to his family and friends that he and Elizibeth had decided not to have any children! Four years later, on April 19th, 1917 Nymphus died at home. His last dying act was to give his son Joseph a Patriarchal Blessing. He had been a pioneer from the same mold as Joseph Murdock. He had been a pioneer, legislator, sheriff, militiaman, and Black Hawk War veteran as well as a prominent businessman. When he died he left an estate of \$40,000, a fortune at that time. One of his own sayings described him best, and was a fitting eulogy. *"When I die I will have ten years of work planned!"*<sup>12</sup>

With neither Joseph nor Nymphus to care for him, poor Benny Norris became even more of a burden for Jane and Elizibeth. In his old age he had to be cared for constantly. He lived to be 81 years old, dying on October 13th, 1921. He was the last tie with the Murdock's New York State home.

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10. Salt Lake Tribune, June 26th, 1911.

11. Men Of The Rockies, Pg. 58, Hanks, 1944.

12. Ibid, Pg. 57.

The life of Joseph Stacy Murdock was a life of adventure, and the times in which he lived spanned an era from the first western settlement to the dawn of the twentieth century, from Indian villages to modern cities, from ox teams to gas buggies. Although he lived and talked with Prophet Joseph, his last child died as recently as 1966. Joseph Murdock and all of his immediate family are gone now, but his heritage still lives on, forever remembered on the rolls of the Utah pioneers, and in names as solid and everlasting as Murdock Mountain. His memory will last as long as the mountain lasts.